Atomic Gardening in the 1950s

Atomic Energized seeds were marketed to housewives to experiment with at home.

Atomic Gardening

Atomic Gardening began as a campaign to promote the peaceful use of fission energy after the end of World War II.

Coming out of an extended period of conflict that only ended by using the most powerful and destructive weapons ever wielded by humankind, Atoms for Peace was an initiative to harness the power of the atom to help humanity thrive in the future.

They set up a series of Gamma Gardens across the globe, including the US, Russia, and Japan that used cobalt isotopes as a source of radiation.

Atomic gardens used radiation to induce useful mutations in plants. Scientists arranged typical gardens in a circle, with different levels of radiation reaching plants from the center.

Plants close to radiation sources usually died, and mid-ranged plants would develop tumors and growths. At the far reaches of the garden, plants typically survived, but with significant mutations.

Successes

Ideally, some plants might develop mutations that could prove beneficial, and then be bred into normal plants.

A peppermint plant resistant to particular strains of wilt, for example, was bred using atomic gardening.

Irradiated seeds became the “in” seeds for farmers, and “Atomic Energized” seeds were even marketed to housewives to conduct their own atomic gardening experiments at home.

Ruby-red grapefruit, rice, wheat, pears, cotton, peas, sunflowers, bananas and countless other produce owe their present-day heartiness to the genetic modification afforded by atomic gardening.

Atomic Gardening Today

Modern genetic engineering has become far more precise using modern science techniques and gene sequencing technology, and only one large atomic garden remains.

The Institute of Radiation Breeding in Japan has the trademark pie-shape of gamma gardens. The compound stretches over 300 feet across, and 25-foot tall shielded wall surrounds the entire garden to contain spill-off radiation.

The lab is currently breeding for fungus resistance and fruit color.


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